

Week Nine

Mission in Community (the Church)

“every day they continued to meet
together in the temple courts.”

INTRODUCTION

We really hope that you've enjoyed this Chapter One journey.

Over the past nine weeks, we've explored our seven 'rhythms' of discipleship together: **The rhythms of scripture, prayer, power, freedom, worship, generosity** and **reaching out**.

We believe that these seven rhythms are key to living the life we have all been created for – a life that is exciting and energising, a life of meaning and purpose.

There's one final thing to explore – one final thing that marked out the lives of the early followers of Jesus: they did life **together**. Miss the importance of community, and you miss the point.

In world where many people are lonely and isolated, the church can be a wonderful expression of diversity in community... ordinary people, from all kinds of backgrounds, growing in relationship with God, capturing his heart for mission, and learning what it looks like to love each other.

So in this final week of Chapter One, we'll ask what it means to belong, what it looks like to journey together, and where the church is headed on this wonderful adventure with God.

BIBLE PASSAGES

Use the notes on 'How to read the Bible' to reflect on or study one of these passages each day in the week leading up to small group session.

Day one

Reading: John 13:34

Day two

Reading: Acts 2:42-47

Day three

Reading: Matthew 28:16-20

Day four

Reading: Acts 2:37-41

Day five

Reading: Revelation 21:1-7

1 Mission in Community | You were made to belong

Reading: John 13:34

DEVOTIONAL

It's not good for man to be alone. We just weren't designed for it.

God has made us for community. We were wired this way. And the most important reason for this is that God himself is relational.

As we said at the start of our journey back in week one, Father, Son and Spirit have always lived in community together. And because God has made us in His own image, to be in relationship with others – to belong – is in the very core of our being.

As Christians we are to belong to a church, to the body of Christ. And of course, there is a vast difference between simply attending and belonging.

Attending doesn't necessarily require you to give of yourself, or make yourself vulnerable, or allow yourself to be known. With attending, you can show up late and leave before things get complicated. But belonging asks more of you.

Belonging involves things like sharing, practising hospitality, honouring others. To belong to a family is more than to just show up for meals. A family is a place where we love, and are loved, in a way that helps us become all we should be.

Belonging is more messy – and sometimes a whole lot more inconvenient. But it's more rewarding, too. And it's also incredibly attractive to the outside world.

People are drawn into relationship with God through the kindness of authentic Christian love more often than through theological arguments. Loving others is the proof that we love God.

“By this”, Jesus says, “everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

RESPONSE

What sorts of things make you feel like you belong in a church? Do you feel like you belong at King's? Why? Why not?

NOTES

2 Mission in Community | Intentional togetherness

Reading: Acts 2:42-47

DEVOTIONAL

We are all prone to drift – and all the more as we become adrift.

In today's passage, the word 'together' is written three times. It is there to emphasise the importance of togetherness. Your personal growth is a community project, not an individual one.

The early church knew the value of walking through life together. They prayed daily for one another, served together, and encouraged one another. Recognising each other as brothers and sisters, they shared all they had so that everyone could benefit. God's family works best when we all work together.

The visual aid of the early church in the towns and cities of that day must have been staggering. Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female, all one in Christ. An eye-opening revolution involving an immense diversity of people of different culture and status being built together.

But it doesn't just happen. People rarely drift into deep community. The microwave is a great invention, but you can't do microwave friendships. Togetherness takes time, and requires intentionality, particularly in an individualistic culture like ours.

Bronnie Ware wrote a book on the top 5 regrets of the dying. Most of them involved the common thread of relationships.

"I worked too hard and never made time for my family"

"I should have made more time for my friends"

"I should have said, 'I love you' a lot more"

Small groups have always been a key part of life at King's – and they remain so today. They're a way of being intentional about knowing Jesus, being known, and knowing others.

We hope you've experienced togetherness throughout Chapter One, and we'd love you to think about how you can deliberately maintain this next term. Your own personal growth depends on it.

RESPONSE

Which relationships in your life are the ones you want to make sure you maintain? How will you prioritise community with other Christians following Chapter One?

NOTES

3 Mission in Community | Cruise Ship vs Battleship

Reading: Matthew 28:16–20

DEVOTIONAL

Do you see the church as more like a cruise ship or a battleship? Let me explain what I mean.

Cruise ships are there to help people relax... to get away from the stresses and the pressures of day-to-day life. Cruise ships are about comfort and entertainment.

The trouble is, if we view the church this way, we'll find ourselves asking certain kinds of questions to evaluate our experience: "Do I like the music they play?" "Are my kids entertained?" "Does the service here meet my needs?" "Am I comfortable?"

Of course, we want people to have a great experience of church. Powerful preaches that impact lives. Times of worship that lift us beyond our circumstances, and help fix our eyes on God. We want an environment where people of all ages, from all backgrounds, can thrive and become all they were made to be.

God deserves the best, and so do his people – but church isn't there for our comfort and entertainment. No sermon will be exactly how we want it. There will be times when we don't like the worship song, or when the music's too loud, too quiet, or just not our cup of tea.

But, while cruise ships exist for the pleasure and comfort of their passengers, on a battleship, everyone is serving a mission greater than their own. Each person is giving themselves for a higher goal, and each is counting on the person next to them to fulfil their role.

When we see the church as a battleship, we'll ask entirely different questions: "Is this ship on a mission I would gladly give my life to?" "Is it built to withstand a storm?" "Does the captain submit to a higher authority... and are the people equipped to fight?"

In today's passage, Jesus spells out the glorious mission of the church – to go and make disciples, in his authority, and with his presence. That means getting stuck in alongside our brothers and sisters. Joining in the battle. Serving together to see the lost saved, to see the captives set free, to see disciples made.

At King's, we exist to see ordinary people changed by Jesus to change the world. Are you in?

RESPONSE

How do you tend to judge a church? What things do you look out for? How could you use the gifts you have to see ordinary people changed by Jesus to change the world?

NOTES

4 Mission in Community | Commitment

Reading: Acts 2:37-41

DEVOTIONAL

Some people find commitment scary. “If I commit (to this decision, this relationship, this career path) what will it mean?” “Am I tied in for life?” “But, what if I change my mind?”

It’s fair to say that the early disciples were a committed people – committed to Jesus and committed to each other.

So what does it look like to commit at King’s? Here are two steps of commitment we get excited about: commitment to Jesus through **baptism** and commitment to the church through **membership**.

At King’s we see baptism in water as a public expression of inward faith – and a powerful and foundational part of following Jesus.

As Peter says in today’s passage, the immediate response to understanding what Jesus has done for you is to repent – to turn away from your old life – and to get in the water. “Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”

Baptism mornings at Kings are exciting, powerful times when the whole church celebrates the encouraging stories of what God has done in ordinary people’s lives.

At King’s, we also value membership. The early disciples devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching. Devotion is an active thing. It’s about agreeing with the vision, beliefs and values of a church, and saying: “this is where I believe God is calling me to be.”

We see membership as an important step in mutual commitment – a commitment from the church to its leadership, and commitment from the leadership to the church.

If you’ve not yet been baptised, or you’re not yet a church member, we’d love you to come to one of our Exploring Baptism or Exploring Church Membership mornings to find out more.

RESPONSE

If you’ve been baptised, think back to that time. What do you remember about it? If you haven’t been baptised, what are your thoughts about it? What does church membership mean to you?

NOTES

5 Mission in Community | Where the story ends

Reading: Revelation 21:1-7

DEVOTIONAL

When you're starting out on an adventure, it's helpful to keep in mind where you're going.

There may be times along the journey when things get tough, when the road becomes hard, and progress feels limited. Keeping your eyes fixed on the endpoint gives you courage to keep going.

It's the pub at the end of the hike, the bed at the end of the night shift, the prize at the end of the race. When others stumble, you can remind them of where you're heading.

The penultimate chapter of the Bible gives a glimpse of where the church is heading – and it is glorious. If we will only lift our eyes, there's enough to keep us going, to fill us with courage. To stir us to faith.

The picture you get in the book of Revelation is of a renewed earth and a renewed heaven. No more death or mourning, sadness or pain. The creation now, finally, set free from the effects of the fall. And all evil is destroyed.

And at the centre of it all, is a relationship. The church, no longer trampled and fearful, but glorious! Like a bride, beautifully prepared and perfected, to be with Jesus forever.

Where all else fades away, the church will stand. And the most glorious promise of all: the intimate presence of Jesus. Unhindered relationship, the fog removed. He will be with them. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And He will be your God, and you will be his children...

If you are a follower of Jesus, this is your inheritance. It is an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. It is done. It is finished. The end is set – won by the victory of Jesus.

Whatever the next step is in your own personal journey with God, keep your eyes fixed on the immovable ending.

RESPONSE

If you know you have eternity with Jesus to look forward to, read today's passage again and allow it to lift your eyes to Jesus.

Then, worship.

NOTES